



ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES DEPARTMENT

SANTA CRUZ, CALIFORNIA 95064

DATE: November 22, 2013

TO: Committee on Educational Policy
c/o Suzanna Wrangell, Analysis

FROM: Andrew Szasz, Chair
Environmental Studies Department

RE: UCSC DCG Funds Application

Dear Suzanna,

The Environmental Studies Department was excited to learn about the 2014-2015 Call for UCSC Disciplinary Communication Improvement Grants. Our foundational DC course—ENVS 100 and 100L—is in need of a formal writing tutoring program to enhance writing proficiency. With the help of this funding, Environmental Studies would be able to structure and organize regular workshops for TAs and faculty, provide more standardized, transportable materials and expand our nascent writing program. These efforts would result in more personal guidance, formal training and rigorous feedback for our undergraduate students.

Please find enclosed a copy of our application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "ASzasz", written in a cursive style.

Andrew Szasz

Application for UCSC DCG Funds
Submit to the Academic Senate Office, c/o Susanna Wrangell
(swrangel@ucsc.edu) by November 22, 2013 and March 30, 2014.

Proposals must be approved by the department or program chair and Dean. They are due in the Academic Senate Office by November 22, 2013 and March 30, 2014 at 5 p.m. and may be submitted by email to swrangel@ucsc.edu.

1) Proposed title for Disciplinary Communication Grant (DCG)?

The Environmental Problem Solving Writing Tutor Program

2) Department/Program:

Environmental Studies

3) Amount requested:

\$15,020.00

4) Number of students affected:

350 annually

5) Overview of the program's DC requirement:

The Department of Environmental Studies trains students to be able to critically analyze interdisciplinary environmental problems, justify their position on an issue, and communicate that position to a range of audiences in writing. The department has long emphasized research, critical analysis, and writing skills because we believe that solving complex environmental problems requires collaboration and the ability to communicate effectively with people who have diverse ideas, expertise, and skill levels within the environmental field.

In order to satisfy the Department's Disciplinary Communication requirement, all Environmental Studies single and combined majors must complete ENVS 100 and 100L in addition to the student's senior exit option (i.e., ENVS 183B, 190, 195A, 195B, or 196). ENVS 100/L's intensive focus on writing is critical for the major and for our upper division courses.

Specific goals for writing and collaborative work in Environmental Studies include:

Writing

1. Write clearly and succinctly in a way that is tailored for the specific audience for which the information is intended.

2. Evaluate a range of positions on environmental issues.
3. Synthesize information from and communicate across different disciplines.
4. Substantiate arguments using peer-reviewed literature.

Collaborative work

1. Work effectively in groups with people with different ideas, expertise, and skill levels.
2. Develop effective synthesis skills and respect differing opinions.
3. Provide constructive feedback on the work of others.

6) What is proposed?

This grant seeks to ***enhance our innovative instructional program with the Writing Program*** and launch a ***formal writing tutoring program*** for the foundational DC course in the Environmental Studies Department—ENVS 100 and 100L. This 7-unit course (5 units for lecture and a 2 unit writing lab) requires all students to engage in multiple forms of written and spoken communication. Course objectives are directed towards critical evaluation of scientific and policy literature, writing clear and concise arguments about environmental issues and engaging in and responding to the peer review process and constructing policy-relevant arguments for decision-makers. While the course has been successful in training majors to write for the discipline, there is ample room for improvement in writing proficiency and effective communication. With the aid of a formal writing tutoring program, students will receive more personal guidance and rigorous feedback, both of which are imperative to developing stronger writing skills.

In the fall of 2010, Environmental Studies began a new collaborative initiative with the Writing Program to enhance student disciplinary writing skills. Two full-time lecturers were appointed to work with both the teaching staff (2 faculty members and 4-5 TAs) and with students in lecture, labs, and through individual advising sessions throughout the quarter. Since the program began, it has been very effective and has significantly enhanced student skills to write interdisciplinary natural and social science style papers. Preliminary signs of this success have been noted by faculty teaching upper division courses. Based on our experience over the past three years, we now seek to formalize our nascent writing program in ENVS 100 and to explore several new areas to further enhance our DC skills training. In particular, we intend to develop new methods to encourage students to develop more rigorous and effective process-oriented writing and multi-staged drafting of essays. In addition, while we seek to increase the amount of writing students complete and to further develop our focus on writing style and form, we also have noted over the past several years that our TAs need more formal training to further developed their writing instructional abilities throughout the writing process. Our proposed program will seek to further our existing writing program to address these goals and will develop more standardized, transportable (from year-to-year) materials for TAs and faculty to use in the future.

Short-term funds would be used to support a Writing Program lecturer for two quarters to facilitate the development of our expanded, formalized tutoring program. This

lecturer will be fully integrated into each course and the lab sections as part of the teaching staff. During the quarter, in addition to providing mentoring and writing skills advising, which were developed collaboratively over the past several years, we will work in a collaborative fashion to design formal writing instruction and skill workshop modules that will be tested and evaluated during weekly teaching staff meetings and student labs. After one round of testing, the modules will then be revised as necessary and archived for future course use on an on-going basis. Overall, it is our goal to develop a suite of effective DC skills modules that have been thoroughly evaluated in the course to enhance both student and teaching staff abilities.

7) What problem will this proposal solve?

The department is in need of a formal writing tutoring program. While the collaboration with the Writing Program over the past three years has shown great potential in enhancing students' writing proficiency, funding and resources are needed to further develop the program.

8) How does the DC fit within your program's learning outcome goals?

The DC requirement embedded in ENVS 100 and 100L expose students to each of Environmental Studies' four learning goals:

1. Learn how to analyze environmental problems in order to move towards a more sustainable future for human and ecological systems.
2. Develop a broad, interdisciplinary knowledge of environmental problems and skills to address them.
3. Develop depth of expertise in environmental studies.
4. Be able to collaborate and communicate effectively with people who have diverse ideas, expertise, and skill levels within the environmental field.

ENVS 100 is the gateway into the major's upper division courses. Students enter the course with a basic understanding of a range of environmental concepts and leave with strong writing skills and knowledge of key areas needed to succeed in advanced Environmental Studies classes. Thus, this DC course is uniquely situated within major's curriculum, using writing and disciplinary communication to achieve course and overall programmatic goals.

The course addresses each of the departmental objectives in several ways. Writing conventions and disciplinary communication traditions in environmental studies are taught in ENVS 100 through topical lectures on writing, the assignment of written exemplars in environmental studies, faculty debates that draw on particular research traditions and through extensive individual verbal and written feedback from teaching staff. Disciplinary conventions are taught through lectures on the writing process, peer reviewing and group collaborative activities. In addition, extensive class time is

devoted to writing mechanics, utilizing research databases through the university library and deconstructing texts. Feedback on the mechanics of writing is complemented by individual writing guidance by course staff and, with the aid of this grant, more focused assistance from a writing tutoring program.

9) Detailed budget: (you may attach additional spreadsheet)

Budget	
	Total Requested
ENVS Writing Tutor Lecturer-2 quarters salary, one for each offering of the course (Brij Lunine)	\$15,020.00

10) Assessment plan. How will the effectiveness of this change be measured?

The primary group overseeing this project, The Environmental Studies Curriculum Committee, will use *a mixed methods* approach to evaluate the effectiveness of the writing tutoring program. The lead professor of ENVS 100 is a member of the Committee and will be integral to the evaluation of our proposed program. The means of assessment are as follows:

First, we will compare students' grades in a first draft—assigned to students early in the course—and final draft of the major paper required in ENVS 100/L. This “before-after” measurement seeks to evaluate whether or not the writing tutoring program successfully improves the writing quality and performance of students over the course of ENVS 100.

Second, the writing lab grade (100L) will allow us to evaluate each individual student score numerically and collectively using basic quantitative analytical techniques. Extensive lab time is and will continue to be devoted to key components of what will become our tutoring program—feedback, writing mechanics and individualized attention on student papers. This quantitative assessment, which is already integrated into the department's performance learning outcomes (PLO), offers a useful indicator of achieving effective communication.

Third, we will utilize two qualitative in-class methods to measure changes in our writing skill mentoring program. We will add qualitative assessment questions to our online student evaluations that seek student feedback on writing modules and self-assessments of changes in their writing skills. In addition, we will also have all teaching staff (and writing lecturers) complete short qualitative self-assessments of changes in their writing instructional abilities as well as changes in student skills.

Finally, we will we will conduct post-class qualitative surveys of faculty that teach upper division courses to assess changes in student writing skills across the major. This measurement of the writing program's success will be contextually rich and will complement information from our other assessments. Because all of our upper division courses require ENV5 100/L, we have a discrete "cohort" sample of students that have successfully completed both the course and the writing tutoring program. We have actually been conducting informal surveys with faculty over the past three years to assess the effects of our DC writing program efforts, so this method has already been successfully developed. Overall, since 2010, ENV5 faculty have noted some improvement in student skills.

11) Sustainability. How will this innovation be continued without DCG funding?

Assuming that the assessment, described above, shows that this innovation is working, the Chair of ENV5 will prioritize using Departmental TAS funding to continue supporting the writing tutor component for ENV5 100.

Recommended by (or attach dated email approval):



11/22/13

Dept. Chair or Program Director

Date

Dean

Date

Approved by CEP May 22, 2013



Susanna Wrangell <swrangel@ucsc.edu>

My Endorsement for ENVS DC Grant Application

1 message

Sheldon Kamieniecki <sk1@ucsc.edu>

Fri, Nov 22, 2013 at 11:34 AM

To: Susanna Wrangell <swrangel@ucsc.edu>

Cc: Andrew Szasz <szasz@ucsc.edu>, Sheldon Kamieniecki <sk1@ucsc.edu>

Dear Susanna,

I strongly support the attached proposal for funding for a writing tutor component for ENVS 100, the gateway course to the environmental studies major, which also serves as one of the ways environmental studies majors can satisfy the DC requirement. I have included my signature at the end of the document.

Best,
Sheldon

—
Sheldon Kamieniecki, Dean
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